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REMARKS

Independent claims 1 and 10 are amended to recite where the nitrogen-rich gas is fed. The terms added are disclosed in, for instance, paragraphs 0057-0058 and 0063-0065.

The amendments confirm a distinction between the claimed methods and the disclosures of the references that have been cited in previous rejections of the claims.

That distinction is that the nitrogen-rich stream that is obtained in applicants' claimed method, by separating air into oxygen-rich and nitrogen-rich streams, is fed "into" the combustion device in the sense that the nitrogen-rich stream is fed so that it necessarily enters the gaseous atmosphere within the combustion device and is exposed to and mixes with other gaseous products that are present in that gaseous atmosphere.

None of the references discloses or suggests this feature.

U.S. Patent No. 4,568,443 ("Burge") does not disclose separating air into oxygen-rich and nitrogen-rich streams and then feeding both streams to the combustion device as claimed herein, where they both combine with the other products in the gaseous atmosphere inside the combustion device.

U.S Patent No. 6,282,901 ("Marin"), particularly relied on in the previous rejections as showing the

nitrogen rich stream fed into, or to, a combustion device, does not disclose or suggest the nitrogen rich stream joining the gaseous atmosphere within the combustion device. Instead, in Marin, the only time that the nitrogen-rich stream is "into" or "in" the combustion device is while the nitrogen-rich stream is inside a pipe that carries the stream through the device for heat exchange purposes only, without any possible joining of the nitrogen-rich stream with the atmosphere inside the combustion device. See, for instance, Marin's Figures 1-4 and the text cited in the previous Office Actions: the nitrogen-rich stream is always just passing through a heat exchanger, or through a power generating unit. The nitrogen-rich stream never is set loose into the atmosphere within the combustion device.

The claim amendments herein recite where, in applicants' invention, the nitrogen-rich stream is fed, in a way that the nitrogen-rich stream necessarily joins the gaseous atmosphere within the combustion device.

Since neither Burge nor Marin discloses or suggests a feature that is required by applicants' amended claims 1-20, it follows that claims 1-20 are patentably distinct from those references. The previous rejections that combined Burge or Marin with other references (U.S. Patent No. 4,257,763 ("Reed") and U.S. Patent No. 5,809,910 ("Svensson") are also overcome for the same reasons.

D-21,289

For all the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that pending claims 1-20 as amended can and should be allowed.

Respectfully submitted,

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